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Keeping
Washington
on the Move!



The Transportation Crisis

Transportation congestion is affecting our area’s quality of life. A recent federally funded study by the Texas Transportation Institute ranked the Vancouver area in the top 10 for worst traffic congestion among large cities.

Congestion impacts our community at every level. It’s an issue that extends far beyond the mere inconvenience of being “stuck in traffic.” Every minute we sit in traffic is valuable time spent away from our families, friends and even our jobs. Traffic congestion takes a heavy toll on our economy. Already showing signs of slowing, our economy simply cannot thrive unless we make it easier, quicker and less expensive to get people and products where they need to go.

Traffic Congestion: A Statewide Crisis!

| Metro Area | National Gridlock Rank | Worst Traffic by Size |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Seattle-Everett | 3 rd most congested | 1 st among Large cities |
| Vancouver-Portland | 8 th most congested | 3 rd among Large cities |
| Tacoma | 22 nd most congested | 1 st among Medium cities |
| Spokane | 59 th most congested | 4 th among Small cities |

Source: Texas Transportation Institute, 2001 Urban Mobility Study

GOV. LOCKE’S \$17.2 BILLION TAX PLAN

On May 2, the governor unveiled a 10-year, \$17.2 billion dollar proposal to fund state and regional transportation improvement projects. More than \$9 billion would come in the form of statewide tax and fee increases, including:

- 7¢ increase in gas taxes (4¢ in 2002; 3¢ in 2004);
- 2% additional excise tax (sales tax) on new and used automobiles; and
- 50% increase in the gross weight surcharge for commercial (business) trucks.

Metropolitan regions could then seek voter-approved tax increases to generate the remaining \$8 billion for regional projects. Local tax increases could include additional gas tax increases, higher local sales taxes, tolls on new or improved roads, and increased vehicle fees.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS’ \$10+ BILLION TAX PLAN

The House Democrat transportation tax proposal would raise \$10 billion in state funds over the next decade by:

- 8¢ increase in gas taxes (4¢ in 2002; 2¢ in 2003; 2¢ in 2004);
- 2% additional excise tax (sales tax) on new and used automobiles – *and on car parts, accessories and services*;
- 25% increase in the gross weight surcharge for commercial (business) trucks – *while expanding the fees to include motor homes*; and,
- \$30 fee (in addition to the current \$30 MVET) per vehicle, dedicated to local bus service and passenger ferries.

Metropolitan regions would then be authorized to raise additional local taxes in accordance with the governor’s plan.

(continued)

THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN PLAN:
EFFICIENCIES FIRST!

Bringing relief to congested roads and highways, improving safety and enhancing mobility throughout Washington was a top priority this session.

House Republicans were firm in our resolve that until all possible efficiencies and savings have been identified and corrected, it would be unfair, irresponsible and inappropriate to further burden the families, taxpayers or businesses of this state with higher taxes.

With that in mind, we introduced a four-point transportation efficiency plan that could potentially save billions of dollars. I was extremely encouraged when the House approved the first component of the plan on the last day of the special session.

Senate Bill 6188 will streamline the environmental permitting process for transportation projects. Although the permitting process is streamlined, environmental standards are not relaxed in any way. By adopting common-sense changes, the length of time now required for the permitting process could be cut in half, and the overall cost of transportation projects could be cut up to 20 percent, according to estimates.

I remain committed to adopting the remaining three components of the House Republican plan. By doing so, we could save \$4 billion or more over ten years. The remaining components include:

• COMPETITIVE BIDDING TO PRIVATE SECTOR.

A 1998 audit of DOT estimated that simply opening up routine highway maintenance work to contract competition could save taxpayers up to 10 percent on engineering, design work and routine projects.

• REFORM PREVAILING WAGE LAWS.

Current state laws result in contractors on road construction projects having to pay the highest wages from the largest city in their geographic area. Estimates indi-

cate local governments, especially in rural areas, could free up hundreds of millions of dollars for additional transportation projects through “prevailing wage” reforms.

• PRIORITIZE CRITICAL EMERGENCY RELIEF PROJECTS.

House Republicans believe immediate relief to some of Washington’s most congested areas should be addressed without further delay. Traffic congestion is the number one factor threatening quality of life for families in Washington and hindering efforts to jumpstart our state’s economy

For more information please contact me
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